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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 002151

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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: Somalia - Meeting with Ethiopian State Minister

Classified by PolOff Mitch Benedict for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: As requested, the Ambassador met May 20 with Tekeda Alemu, Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs to discuss a joint U.S.-Ethiopian approach on Somalia. Tekeda pressed on a U.S.-Ethiopia meeting with Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Yusuf to be held in Mogadishu at the earliest possible date. The Ambassador agreed on the need to meet Yusuf, but said security concerns would likely prohibit U.S. travel to Mogadishu. Baidoa was discussed as an alternative site for a meeting. Tekeda agreed on the need to pursue a political dialogue, and to replace PM Gedi with a more credible Hawiye leader. End Summary.

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Joint U.S.-Ethiopia Action  
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¶2. (C) The Ambassador met May 20 with Tekeda Alemu, Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs to discuss next steps on Somalia and possible joint U.S.-Ethiopian approaches. Tekeda strongly supported a U.S.-Ethiopia meeting with President Yusuf, in Mogadishu, for the purpose of committing Yusuf to pursuing political dialogue as a means to achieving lasting peace and stability. The Ambassador fully agreed on the value of meeting jointly with President Yusuf, and possibly separately with the Hawiye leadership, if the Yusuf meeting produced concrete results worth following up. Acting in concert the U.S. and Ethiopia could facilitate an agreement between Yusuf and the Hawiye that would create the conditions for a successful National Reconciliation Congress (NRC).

¶3. (C) The Ambassador counseled that security concerns would likely prohibit our traveling to Mogadishu at this time. Tekeda pressed on the symbolic importance of going to Mogadishu, and argued that only Mogadishu would permit effective "shuttle diplomacy" between Yusuf and the Hawiye if that were to materialize. The Ambassador submitted that Nairobi or Baidoa would be a more realistic venue for us to meet President Yusuf. Tekeda dismissed Nairobi as a viable alternative. He then interrupted the meeting to call Foreign Minister Seyoum directly to get his views. Reportedly, Seyoum confirmed Mogadishu as the preferred location for a joint meeting with Yusuf; Baidoa would be acceptable as a last resort.

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Agenda for Yusuf Meeting  
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¶4. (C) Tekeda advised that one must be very firm in dealing with Yusuf. We should have a "very frank and very open" conversation with Yusuf on the subject of Gedi, who, Tekeda noted, does not even have the support of his own clan. While we both want to see the defeat of the Shabaab and extremists, Tekeda said the TFG has to demonstrate governance capabilities in order to gain respect and legitimacy. He

said they need credibility with the people of Mogadishu in particular, and changing the prime minister would help address this issue.

15. (C) Additionally, the issue of the Benadir administration and the governance of the Mogadishu region must to be addressed, as does the planning for the NRC. However, knowing that Ali Mahdi's National Governance and Reconciliation Commission is to be independent of the TFG, Tekeda said we must be cautious but nonetheless discuss with Yusuf in advance NRC planning and preparations in order to ensure a good outcome. The Ambassador agreed that Yusuf needs to support the announcement of an agenda for the NRC at the earliest possible date. He noted that based on Tekeda's comments, U.S. and Ethiopian views on how to proceed appear to track closely.

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Hawiye Leadership Committee  
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16. (C) Tekeda cautioned us that the Hawiye are not a tightly knit homogeneous "family." Divisions within the Hawiye are greater than we think, he said. Tekeda told us the GOE reacted very negatively to U.S. and European efforts to meet in Nairobi with the Hawiye Leadership Committee (HLC), which has been engaged in on-again off-again dialogue with President Yusuf and the TFG in Mogadishu. Tekeda asserted that a meeting of the international community in Nairobi with the HLC would amount to "undercutting what President Yusuf is trying to do," and would therefore be counterproductive to the political process underway in Mogadishu.

17. (C) The Ambassador emphasized that we had no intention to weaken the TFG's position; in fact, quite the contrary. Our efforts are to strengthen the prospects for real reconciliation. By meeting with them, said the Ambassador, we can press the Hawiye to stay in the political process, to isolate the extremists, and to participate

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fully in the National Reconciliation Congress. Tekeda held to the view that international engagement with the HLC in Nairobi undermines the TFG.

18. (C) According to Tekeda, Ethiopia suspects that the HLC is nothing but a "Trojan horse" for the Hawiye/Haber Gedir/Ayr. He claimed that the major personalities behind the HLC are all Ayr, and the Ayr have been the most associated with opposition to the TFG. Therefore, Ethiopia believes it more important "to deal with" the Ayr directly than with the HLC.

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Mogadishu  
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19. (C) Tekeda said the current situation in Mogadishu is "very good." He praised Mohamed Dheere's performance as Mayor of Mogadishu. Dheere, according to Tekeda, is gaining in popularity through civic action such as organizing youth to pick up trash and clean neighborhoods. However, Tekeda acknowledged that the status quo cannot be maintained without grievances being addressed, and the grievances are not limited to the Hawiye. Even among the Darod, President Yusuf's own clan, there are dissatisfactions. Tekeda warned that the situation in Kismayo, where control over local administration has lead to conflict between the Majerteen and Marehan sub-clans of the Darod, bears continued close monitoring.

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Arab League Intentions Suspect  
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110. (C) Tekeda said the Arab League has not been helpful; indeed, some members are working to scuttle the political process. Egypt was singled out as actively engaged in undermining Ethiopian engagement in Somalia. They are promoting Hassan Dahir Aweys, who is an extremist with links to terrorist groups, said Tekeda. What the U.S. overlooks, according to Tekeda, is that "we are at cross purposes" with Cairo. Saudi intentions were also viewed as suspect. The Ambassador said we are working with the Saudis and other Arab states

to elicit their financial and political support for reconciliation and dialogue in a way that does not bring the Islamic Courts into the process. Tekeda agreed that there is no role for the Islamic Courts in the process.

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International Contact Group  
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¶11. (C) The April 3 meeting in Cairo of the International Contact Group (ICG) was "disappointing" to the GOE. Tekeda said the agenda appeared to be largely under the control of the Arab League meeting. He said Ethiopia has requested to become a member and is awaiting a reply. According to Tekeda, Ethiopia has been asked to comment on the prospect of Egypt becoming a member. Addis Ababa does not intend to reply until such time as Ethiopia has been invited to join. The Ambassador remarked that the next ICG meeting is scheduled to be held in early June in London, where the U.K. and U.S. will likely exert significant control over the agenda.  
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